

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Monday, September 10, 2012, at the Agriculture Building Board Room located at 2800 N. Lincoln in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Vice Chairman Jim Grego. He stated this was a regularly scheduled meeting in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, Title 25, Sections 301 and following as amended. The agenda for this meeting was posted September 6, 2012, at the front entrance of the building.

ROLL CALL

Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary, took roll call and the following members were in attendance:

Jim Grego, Vice Chair
Karl Jett, Secretary
Mike Rooker, Area 2 Member
George Stunkard, Area 3 Member

Members absent:

Dan Lowrance, Chair

Others in attendance were:

Mike Thralls, Executive Director
Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director
Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director
Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Program Director
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director
Mike Sharp, Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services Director
Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Janet Stewart, General Counsel
Tashina Kirk, Illinois River Project Coordinator
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director
Blayne Arthur, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Associate
Commissioner
Erin Boeckman, eCapitol
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Jett led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the minutes of the August 13, 2012, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT OF DISTRICT DIRECTOR(S)

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, presented the recommendation for appointment of conservation district director as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the appointment as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director, presented the claims and financial statement as listed in Exhibit #2. A motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF

Tashina Kirk, Illinois River Project Coordinator, was recognized for 5 years of service.

PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

Mr. Thralls presented agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. He recommended ratification for the agreement listed as (a) as this was previously approved by Chairman Lowrance. Mr. Thralls stated that this amendment was initially approved at the August 2012 meeting but it needed further modification. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Jett to ratify the agreement as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Thralls recommended approval of amended agreements listed as (b) - (f). A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the amended agreements as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Thralls recommended approval of the new agreements listed as (g) through (j). A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the new agreements as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS

Mr. Thralls presented the travel request for approval as listed in Exhibit #4. A motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the request as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

FY2013 JOINT PLANS OF OPERATION

Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director, presented the final two FY2013 Joint Plans of Operation for approval from the Cimarron County and Johnston County Conservation Districts. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the plans. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CO-SPONSOR THE OACD AREA MEETINGS

Mr. Thralls recommended that the Commission co-sponsor the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts 2012 Area Meetings as listed.

- a. November 1: Area 1 - Guymon-Victory Methodist Church
- b. November 7: Area 2 - Oklahoma City-Langston University Campus
- c. November 8: Area 4 - Chickasha-Grady County Fairgrounds
- d. November 14: Area 3 - Vinita-Craig County Fairgrounds
- e. November 15: Area 5 - Wilburton-Eastern Oklahoma State College

A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Jett to co-sponsor the meetings. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

FY2014 BUDGET REQUEST

Mr. Thralls stated that the Commission is required to submit its FY2014 budget request to the Office of Management and Enterprise Services by October 1, 2012. He provided a copy of the Conservation District Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Request as listed in Attachment A and outlined the requests as listed. He stated that should pay raises for district employees be requested that it would include pay raises for Conservation Commission employees as well. After discussing each category Mr. Thralls requested direction from members for prioritization of these requests. He also stated that the OACD executive board will be reviewing the request during their retreat later in the month.

Mr. Grego stated that increases to salaries should be a high priority, if not the number one priority. He also stated that watershed o&m and rehabilitation and water quality programs are a priority. Mr. Rooker noted that his district submitted a \$5 million request for roadside erosion and he feels that it is a high priority along with the cost-share program. Mr. Stunkard stated that each category is equally important.

After discussion, Mr. Thralls stated that a budget request will be further developed, reviewed with the OACD board at their retreat later this month, and submitted back to the Commission for additional comments and final approval in October.

OETA DUST BOWL COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

Mr. Thralls reported on the following outreach events stating that the Woodward event held on August 16 and the Oklahoma City event held on August 28 were tremendously successful. He stated that NRCS Chief Dave White and Congressman Frank Lucas are confirmed for attendance at the November 5 event in Stillwater.

- a. Woodward; held on August 16, 2012
- b. Oklahoma City: OETA Studios with Representatives from State Ag Organizations held on August 28, 2012
- c. Guymon, To be scheduled in late September or early October
- d. Altus at the Western Oklahoma State College, October 4, 2012
- e. Stillwater at the OSU Student Union, November 5, 2012
- f. Oklahoma City at the Museum of Art, November 8, 2012
- g. Tulsa at the OSU-Tulsa Campus, November 12, 2012

VOTE TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Grego stated that the Commission needs a vote to enter executive session for the purpose of confidential communications between the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and their attorney for the purpose of discussing settlement agreements with landowners involved in the decommissioning of Cottonwood Creek Watershed Site #15 as authorized by the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act in Section 307(B)(4) of Title 25 of the Oklahoma Statutes. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to enter executive session. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. Mr. Grego requested the following people stay for executive session: Mr. Thralls; Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director; Janet Stewart, General Counsel; and Ron Hilliard, NRCS State Conservationist. Mr. Toole will keep the minutes. Executive Session began at 10:10 a.m.

REGULAR SESSION

At 10:40 a.m. a motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Jett to resume regular session. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

COTTONWOOD CREEK WATERSHED SITE #15

A motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Rooker to authorize Mike Thralls, Executive Director, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, to approve settlement agreements with landowners involved in the decommissioning of Cottonwood Creek Watershed Site #15 upon the review and approval of the individual agreements by the General Counsel for the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, up to \$515,000. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Rooker attended the Pottawatomie County Farmer and Rancher Appreciation Banquet and the Governor's SeptemberFest.

Mr. Jett attended the Dust Bowl event in Woodward and stated its success. He said it brought to life the human side of the dust bowl.

Mr. Grego reported on visiting the Pittsburg County Conservation District office and had a good conversation with staff. He had a chance to visit with Mike Spradling, Oklahoma Farm Bureau about the tour OACD and the Commission held for the OFB board members and stated that it has opened the door for more joint efforts. He stated that the OACD is trying to bring a resolution through the OFB on permanent drought relief assistance. Mr. Grego stated that the Latimer County Conservation District will hold its open house for their new office building on September 13 with a ribbon cutting ceremony and luncheon at 12 noon.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration - Executive Director: Mr. Thralls reported on attending the National Association of State Conservation Agencies annual meeting in Girdwood, Alaska. He stated that it was an exceptional meeting which included conservation tours. The group discussed the centralized decision making within the NRCS and taking away decision making authority from state conservationists. NASCA will develop a White Paper to present to the NRCS Chief stating its concerns and remedies.

District Services Division: Lisa Knauf Owen, Director, also attended the NASCA meeting and spoke about the size and scope of Alaska's fruit and vegetable production. Smaller group discussions included technical assistance dollars for NRCS and the importance of technical assistance from district staffs.

Ms. Knauf Owen participated in the OACDE board meeting and assisted new district personnel. She is also working with district employees on employee identification badges. Ms. Knauf Owen stated that Kevin Varner, District Liaison, compiled the budget numbers that were presented today.

Water Quality Program: Shanon Phillips, Director, stated that staff has completed the first assessment of the water quality data for the Illinois River Watershed. She will be attending the streambank stabilization field day on September 12 along with Mr. Grego and Mr. Stunkard. These projects were administered by Oklahoma State University and funded through the American Recovery Act funds received by the Commission.

Ms. Phillips stated that the FY2013-2014 workplan has been submitted to the EPA and staff has been told an additional ten percent cut is possible. If this cut occurs this workplan will be over \$1 million less than the FY2011-2012 workplan. At the same time, the program still benefits from EPA making special fund awards available through a competitive process.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, reported on the Bacon site in Rogers County and stated that a new contractor has a work order to finish up the Peevyhouse project. Mr. Kastl reported that the Northeastern State University project is still waiting for an Authorization To Proceed from the Office of Surface Mining. The Booth project is also waiting on an ATP.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Mr. Coffman stated that the required audit of the AML's FY12 program has been completed and next will be the FY2012 audit of the water quality program. Staff will begin putting together the Commission's FY2014 budget request. Mr. Coffman reported that the agency's Affirmative Action plan has been completed and will be submitted this week for approval.

Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services: Mike Sharp, Director, stated that a written report was in the meeting packet and he then yielded for questions.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, stated that a written report was in the meeting packet and he then yielded for questions.

Administration - Assistant Director: Mr. Thralls stated that Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, was attending the funeral of former Commission member E.F. Doc Coker today. Mr. Thralls stated that Mr. Pollard will be attending an event in Tulsa on Thursday hosted by Sustainability Tulsa honoring the Commission's carbon program. Stacy Hansen, Clay Pope and Sarah Pope will also be attending.

Members and staff then gave tribute to Doc Coker and his service to the Commission.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Clay Pope, Executive Director, reported on the Dust Bowl events stating that the Woodward event was a great success as was the August 28 event with the ag groups. The next event will be held on October 4 in Altus. Staff is developing a 10 minute screening of the show which will be sent to conservation districts and could be used with their fair booths.

Mr. Pope stated that work continues with drought issues and he will be meeting with legislators to look at a drought package. He then reported on attending a legislative meeting regarding eastern red cedar. He was interviewed by Channel 9 and discussed the loss of pasture, water and wildlife due to cedars.

The OACD executive board will meet on September 20-21. They will be discussing budget issues and by-law changes that will be presented at the area meetings. The first audit of the OACD has been completed. Mr. Pope stated that if members have ideas for the area meetings to let him know.

Mr. Pope stated that the Nature Conservancy, Farmers Royalty and Chesapeake Energy will again sponsor OACD awards. He stated that the Oklahoma Farm Bureau has invited the OACD to set up an interactive display at their convention to be held in November.

Mr. Pope stated that the OACD newsletter should be sent out in the near future. He stated that the micro-grants to districts were selected and awarded but expressed disappointment that more districts did not apply.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, provided a written report. He stated that during a regional NRCS meeting he shared a clip of the Dust Bowl film and now some of the states want to get involved in showing the film. The NRCS staff will also be showing a short version of the film during the state fairs.

Mr. Hilliard stated that federal budgetary sequestration will kick in on January 1, 2013 with a percentage decrease in the NRCS budget of up to 11%. He then stated that 26 conservation districts applied for the NRCS grant program and the following ten districts were selected to receive \$10,000 each: Major County, Texas County, Osage County, Payne County, Jackson County, Greer County, Custer County, Little River, LeFlore and Latimer.

Mr. Hilliard stated that Stacy Riley has been named acting assistant state conservationist for Zone 3 through January 15, 2013.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

Blayne Arthur, Associate Commissioner, stated that staff participated in SeptemberFest where last year over 30,000 people attended. She stated that the department hosted the Austrian Trade Commission and will be hosting members of the Uganda parliament.

The Oklahoma State Fair starts on September 13 and staff is working to educate participants with animals about how to minimize the risk of spreading or contracting swine flu.

Ms. Arthur stated that the Board of Agriculture will meet on September 25 in Altus.

CHANGE TIME LOCATION OF NOVEMBER MEETING

Mr. Thralls stated that because of the Dust Bowl event in Stillwater on November 5, he is recommending that the Commission hold its November 5 meeting in Stillwater with a time to be determined. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to allow staff to set the time and location of the November 5, 2012 meeting. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on Monday, October 1, 2012, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Jett to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on October 1, 2012.


CHAIR

Conservation District Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Request

Increases to current district employee salaries	\$ 747,561.00
New Conservation District Positions	\$ 857,552.00
Increases in Operations Budget	\$ 2,162,872.00
Programs	
Cost-Share Programs	\$ 5,717,500.00
Watershed O&M	\$13,427,120.00
Watershed Rehab	\$65,116,265.00
Roadside Erosion	\$ 7,030,500.00
New Equipment	\$ 2,563,728.00
Vehicles	\$ 1,065,425.00
Water Quality Programs	\$ 968,900.00
Education Programs	<u>\$ 294,250.00</u>
Total Program Requests	\$96,183,688.00
Total FY2014 Budget Requests	\$99,951,673.00